

To: The Berger Commission.

From: L.A.C.O. Hunt (private individual) June, 1976

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L.A.C.O. Hunt

My credentials for appearing before you are quite simply that I first went north in 1928, and in one way or another I have been associated with it ever since. There were two gaps in my direct association, the War 1939-46 and a United Nations assignment, 1960-67. My experience before the War was in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, and my experience after the War was as district administrator of the Mackenzie District, and later as Secretary of the Advisory Committee on Northern Development until my retirement two years ago. I also accompanied the Gordon Economic Commission on their tour of the Northwest Territories in 1954.

I have followed the proceedings of this Commission for the past 14 months and it is clear there has polarized two distinct points of view. There are those who sincerely believe that the pipeline is a necessary project to maintain economic viability for this country. Others equally sincere believe that the pipeline would be an environmental disaster and a moratorium should be declared for further research and to enable the native land claims to be settled. Of course, the decision to build a pipeline is a political one and should not affect the deliberations of this Commission. What I want to talk about is the possible deterioration to the lives of the natives, and the socio-economic aspects that might occur, if we do not take heed of the danger signals. We have already that observed the degradation that has taken place to peoples lives in Alaska resulting from the building of the Aleaska pipeline mainly because the Government there has failed to consider the human factor involved.

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We have in Canada previous experience in massive public works taking place in the north. Let me cite the building of the NW staging route, the Mackenzie Highway, the Canol project and the building of airstrips down the Mackenzie. The first workers to arrive in Fort Smith in 1942 were the negro pioneer corps. The native population was unprepared for the onslaught. The negroes initiated a sweepstake among other things to award to the first Indian to have a baby of mixed blood a prize of \$750.00. It was the beginning of the increase in VD, which today is still rampant and any amount of penicillin has not stopped. In the fifties we had the building of the DEW line, and its impact was felt by the Eskimos. This time the Government issued a ban on fraternization; and, at the same time demanded that the contractors provide employment for the natives. It is to the construction company's credit that they maintained a surveillance over infractions of the fraternization ban, and they also kept alcohol from the camps. There is no doubt that alcohol is one of the major problems, and I confess that I was one of those advisers that recommended that banning of alcohol should be lifted. In my opinion, no ethnic group should be denied its elementary and fundamental rights, and secondly banning alcohol does not prevent its use. Prohibition settled that fallacy. Better for them to drink legitimate booze, than imbibe on wood alcohol and anti-freeze. As justice of the Peace, I was once called urgently to Fort Good Hope the day after New Years 1952. The police had made a dozen arrests the day before, following an all day, all night drinking party. One Indian woman was in custody, she having taken three swipes at her husband ^{with an axe} and connecting on the third. He was given 175 stitches. I asked the Court whether the Chief of the Band was present, and he was. I then asked why he

was unable to control the actions of some of the members of his band, and why all this illicit alcohol was flowing so freely. He replied that Indians had had intoxicating liquor long before the white man arrived on the northern scene. He explained that an Indian would kill a moose or caribou and slit open the stomach. He then would take the fermented juices from the stomach and drink it, for it was intoxicating. One can recall the pictures by Hogarth of 19th century England, with its gin palaces strategically located near the huge textile factories. They were there to placate the frustrations of the workers who had been recruited from the countryside. It took more than a hundred years for the English to realise the disadvantages of excessive alcohol, and it may take our native population a similar period. Be that as it may, it is essential that the northern native benefit from any large construction project, more so than he has in the past. It is not good enough for the Government to sign contracts that indicate that a percentage of the work force must be native. The Government has to provide the incentives, the training and the ambience to enable the native to take full advantage of the opportunities. 15,000 workers at the peak period of construction are a lot of workers at one time in sub arctic Canada. Above all, the trade unions must not be allowed to dominate the recruitment by having its hiring halls only in Edmonton and Vancouver. There are already examples of trade union behaviour, particularly in regard to the building and operation of the Great Slave Lake Railway. I believe that as of now, all native labour on the railway has been replaced by southern Canadian due to the high handed attitude of the trade unions. For some years now the Government set up a committee to find ways and means by which native employment could be made easier.

Unfortunately, the various government departments cannot agree among themselves. They are more concerned about their own vested interests that the objective of making the labour laws easier for the native population is lost in a maze of red tape.

Surely, Mr. Chairman the time has come to put aside the petty differences which exist between government departments and get down to the matter in hand. During my many years of experience in the north, I have asked many parents of native children, ' what do you want for your children'. Invariably, they would reply that they want for them a white man's education. They knew that from the examples around them, that the white man's superiority was based on better knowledge and learning. The white man in the north could often demonstrate his prowess as a hunter, trapper and provider in excess of what any native could do. Given the opportunity the native could emulate, and perhaps surpass the white man. The key is education, but it has to be intensive education and not token education. You heard Noah Carpenter here the other day, an eskimo whose parents live at Sachs Harbour on Banks Island. But Carpenter spent precious little time on Banks ^{Island} Harbour, he is a product of the school cum hostel system that was once the pride and joy of the educational system and developed by Jean Lesage, when he was Minister. This system has now been thrown out on the grounds that native parents do not see their children very often, and so schools have now been built in every settlement. The teacher now never knows whether the pupil will arrive, or whether he has had some food. He returns at night to a house, shack or what you will entirely devoid of books. The result is that now the drop-out rate has risen. Before in the hostel, there was a library, regular sports and hobbies, and even if his own parents were not there, the foster-parents were sympathetic

and understanding. Noah Carpenter profited by that system which has now been discarded by the Territorial Government. I also believe that the experiment at Edzo, where teaching is carried on in the native languages, is doomed to failure, for the natives will emerge ill-equipped for the future. There is no way in which the northern native can find his rightful place in Canadian society unless he has a fluency in one of the two official languages. We are told that this is an effort to preserve native culture, whatever that is, but unfortunately it is the short sighted attitude of a minority, which seeing weakness on the part of the government is increasing its pressure. I regret to take so much of your time on the subject of education, but I consider it to be the most important problem facing the northern native today. If the pipeline is inevitable, and I believe it is, northern education must undergo a massive transformation, and the sooner the Territorial and Federal governments awake from their lethargy the better. One brief comment on environmental problems. The Commission may have seen the mile long fish ladder at Whitehorse. It was built to enable the salmon to bypass the hydro dam, and it is incredible that after swimming 2,700 miles from the Behring Sea, the salmon still have sufficient strength to negotiate this ladder to their spawning grounds. It was built because man cared about the survival of the salmon, and he had no wish to upset nature. Now we are told that the pipeline will seriously interfere with the migratory routes of the caribou. I have no doubt that, as with the salmon, man will use his ingenuity to enable the caribou to continue peacefully on his way.. Those natives who wish to live traditionally, let them do so, and those who want to participate with the white man in his development projects, let him do so.

The choice should be theirs . A middle road can always be found. provided the contractor, the governments and the man who will provide the labour can meet on common ground. There is a great opportunity to do so in the north, and there is time to plan and execute it before the N.E.B. has to make the ultimate decision.

Thank you.

